CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1.   A method in a computer within a computer network for automatically swapping application tasks running within said computer when access from said computer to a remote network site is delayed, said method comprising the steps of:

initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously running at said local network site;

retrieving data from said remote network site, in response to initiating said link;

automatically switching focus from said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application; and

switching focus back to said communications application from said multi-tasking application, in response to said data being retrieved.

2.   The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of automatically switching focus back to said communications application from said multi-tasking application after expiration of a predetermined time period.

3.   The method of claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

distinguishing between a time-consuming link and an immediate link; and

3   determining if said link comprises a time-consuming link or an immediate link.

1   4.   The method of claim 3 wherein the step of automatically switching focus from said
2   communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said
3   local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site by
4   said communications application, further comprises the step of:

5   automatically switching focus from said communications application to a multi-
6   tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response to data
7   being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application, only
8   if said link comprises a time-consuming link.

5.   The method of claim 4 wherein the step of switching focus back to said
communications application from said multi-tasking application, in response to said data
being retrieved, further comprises the steps of:

notifying a user that said data has been retrieved; and

switching focus back to said communications application, in response to user input.

1   6.   The method of claim 5 further comprising the steps of

2   identifying a ring of applications running at said local network site wherein said
3   ring of applications includes a current application followed by a next application;

4   automatically switching focus from a current application included in said ring of

5   applications to a next application included in said ring of applications running at said

6   local network site, in response to said data being retrieved; and

7   maintaining focus on a current application if a next application in said ring of

8   applications remains unidentified.

1   7.   The method of claim 6 further comprising the steps of:

2   identifying a pause in current activity; and

3
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1   discontinuing focus switching until a pause in current activity is identified.

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4   8.   The method of claim 7 wherein the step of initiating a link from a local network

site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking

applications are simultaneously running at said local network site, further comprises the

step of:

5   initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site utilizing a

6   communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously running

7   at said local network site, such that said communications application comprises a browser

8   application.

1   9.   A system in a computer network for automatically swapping application tasks
2   running within a computer within said computer network when access from said computer
3   to a remote network site is delayed, said system comprising:

4   means for initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site
5   utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously
6   running at said local network site;

7   means for retrieving data from said remote network site, in response to initiating
8   said link;

9   means for automatically switching focus from said communications application to
10 a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response
11 to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application;
12 and

13   means for switching focus back to said communications application from said
14 multi-tasking application, in response to said data being retrieved.

1   10.   The system of claim 9 further comprising means for automatically switching focus
2   back to said communications application from said multi-tasking application after
3   expiration of a predetermined time period.

1   11.   The system of claim 10 further comprising:

2   means for distinguishing between a time-consuming link and an immediate link;
3   and

4   means for determining if said link comprises a time-consuming link or an

5   immediate link.

1   12.   The system of claim 11 wherein said means for automatically switching focus from

2   said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at

3   said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site

4   by said communications application, further comprises:

5   means for automatically switching focus from said communications application to

6   a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response

7   to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application,

8   only if said link comprises a time-consuming link.

1   13.   The system of claim 12 wherein said means for switching focus back to said

2   communications application from said multi-tasking application, in response to said data

3   being retrieved, further comprises:

4   means for notifying a user that said data has been retrieved; and

5   means for switching focus back to said communications application, in response

6   to user input.

1   14.   The system of claim 13 further comprising:

2   means for identifying a ring of applications running at said local network site

3   wherein said ring of applications includes a current application followed by a next

4   application; and

5   means for automatically switching focus from a current application included in
6   said ring of applications to a next application included in said ring of applications running
7   at said local network site, in response to said data being retrieved; and

8   means for maintaining focus on a current application if a next application in said
9   ring of applications remains unidentified.

1   15.   The system of claim 14 further comprising:

2   means for identifying a pause in current activity; and

4   means for discontinuing focus switching until a pause in current activity is
5   identified.

1   16.   The system of claim 15 wherein said means for initiating a link from a local
2   network site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-
3   tasking applications are simultaneously running at said local network site, further
4   comprises:

5   means for initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site
6   utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously
7   running at said local network site, such that said communications application comprises
8   a browser application.

1 17. A program product residing in a computer memory of a computer within a
2 computer network for automatically swapping application tasks running within said
3 computer when access from said computer to a remote network site is delayed, said
4 system comprising:

5 instruction means residing in a computer for initiating a link from a local network
6 site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking
7 applications are simultaneously running at said local network site;

8 instruction means residing in a computer for retrieving data from said remote
9 network site, in response to initiating said link;

10 instruction means residing in a computer for automatically switching focus from
11 said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at
12 said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site
13 by said communications application; and

14 instruction means residing in a computer for switching focus back to said
15 communications application from said multi-tasking application, in response to said data
16 being retrieved.

1 18. The program product of claim 17 further comprising instruction means residing
2 in a computer for automatically switching focus back to said communications application
3 from said multi-tasking application after expiration of a predetermined time period.

1   19.   The program product of claim 18 further comprising:

2   instruction means residing in a computer for distinguishing between a time-
3   consuming link and an immediate link; and

4   instruction means residing in a computer for determining if said link comprises a
5   time-consuming link or an immediate link.

1   20.   The program product of claim 19 wherein said instruction means residing in a
2   computer for automatically switching focus from said communications application to a
3   multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response
4   to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application,
5   further comprises:

6   instruction means residing in a computer for automatically switching focus from
7   said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at
8   said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site
9   by said communications application, only if said link comprises a time-consuming link.

1   21.   The program product of claim 20 wherein said instruction means residing in a
2   computer for switching focus back to said communications application from said multi-
3   tasking application, in response to said data being retrieved, further comprises:

4   instruction means residing in a computer for notifying a user that said data has
5   been retrieved; and

6   instruction means residing in a computer for switching focus back to said

7   communications application, in response to user input.

1   22.   The program product of claim 21 further comprising:

2   instruction means residing in a computer for identifying a ring of applications

3   running at said local network site wherein said ring of applications includes a current

4   application followed by a next application; and

5   instruction means residing in a computer for automatically switching focus from

6   a current application included in said ring of applications to a next application included

7   in said ring of applications running at said local network site, in response to said data

8   being retrieved; and

9   instruction means residing in a computer for maintaining focus on a current

10   application if a next application in said ring of applications remains unidentified.

1   23.   The program product of claim 22 further comprising:

2   instruction means residing in a computer for identifying a pause in current activity;

3   and

4

5   instruction means residing in a computer for discontinuing focus switching until

6   a pause in current activity is identified.

1   24.   The program product of claim 23 wherein said instruction means residing in a

2   computer for initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site utilizing

3   a communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously running

4   at said local network site, further comprises:

5   instruction means residing in a computer for initiating a link from a local network

6   site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking

7   applications are simultaneously running at said local network site, such that said

8   communications application comprises a browser application.

1   25.   The program product of claim 24 wherein each of said instruction means further

2   comprises signal bearing media.

1   26.   The program product of claim 25 wherein said signal bearing media further

2   comprises transmission media.

1   27.   The program product of claim 25 wherein said signal bearing media further

2   comprises recordable media.